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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA, B/BXN,  
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON GAZA INCURSION

Editorial Commentary

-- "Israel as we know it"

Chief Editor Taher Odwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (07/03): "Today like yesterday, there is a single image of Israel in our minds, feelings and memory. This image did not change at Camp David or Sadat's trip to Jerusalem. It did not change with the signing of the Oslo accord in the garden of the White House. It did not change with the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in Wadi Araba.... Israel as we know it: a bunch of armies and planes that attack, destroy, occupy, murder and usurp. And then the world trembles, America intervenes, the Soviet Union threatens, and the U.N. and the UNSC meet, and one of two things happen: keeping Israel with its armies and occupations over the Arab land while giving the Arabs insignificant and meaningless international resolutions, or standing by Israel's occupations and blaming its victims.... These are strange upside down times ... but even if they make us walk on our heads and crawl on our hands and abandon our minds and hearts, the image that we have of Israel will not change. It is Israel: an outlaw country that exercises aggression, occupation and terrorism, and whose leaders are thieves and highway bandits who deserve to be dragged to war crime tribunals en masse. It is the source of evil and the cause of the disease, not just in Palestine, but in all of the Middle East."

-- "If I were the Palestinian President"

Columnist Basem Sakijha writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/03): "If I were in Abu Mazen's place, and my people were being subjected to all this injustice and international disregard, and the state [United States] that sponsored a decade of negotiations and stood witness to signed agreements was taking the side of the occupier, Israel, and expressing concern for the life of one soldier captured in battle, and stressing the occupying Hebrew state's right to defend itself, while the tragedy of people living under siege, bombing was completely ignored ... I say, if I were the Palestinian President, I would resign immediately and disband the Palestinian Authority and let the land heat up under the feet of the occupier, so that it would live up to its obligations and wage the battle with all the Palestinian people without discrimination."

-- "How does Jordan respond to Israel's insolence?"

Columnist Bater Wardam writes on the inside page of center-left,

influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (07/02): "So much was written about the Israeli aggression against Gaza, the mass punishment of the Palestinian people, and the heinous crimes committed against Palestinian civilians in the past few days.... The problem however is that most of these writings and statements about the Israeli aggression do not offer a solution. In fact, one of the worst things that the Arabs are going through right now is their inability and helplessness to offer and execute alternatives to the current policies that would contribute to reining in Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people.... The anti-Israel statements and demonstrations have called for the same thing ever since 1996, and this will probably continue in the future, namely the cancellation of the peace treaty with Israel and the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador. Despite its popularity, this option is the best thing that Israel can get from Jordan, because it will give it the green light to continue its procedures for unilateral disengagement, which essentially threatens Jordan's interests. How did we get to this stage? How did the thought of canceling the treaty in response to Israel's aggression become a threat to Jordanian interests? The answer is that the political strategic thinking in Jordan did not take into consideration, throughout the past ten years, a plan of how to act if Israel decides to throw the treaty with Jordan into the garbage and go ahead with policies that completely contradict with the interests of the Jordanian state. The peace treaty has turned from a means to entrench Jordan's legitimacy and security into a means of neutralizing Jordan and, even more, a huge burden on the domestic and foreign policy.... Jordan's diplomacy is in dire need for a radical change in the way it deals with Israel. We are not calling for canceling the treaty, but we in Jordan must 'be free from the burden of the treaty' that restrains all efforts to isolate and rein in Israel and confront it politically within the maximum limits allowed by international relations. Jordan must declare openly and clearly and in all international arenas that the current Israeli policy is threatening Jordanian interests.... There is nothing in the Jordanian Israeli peace treaty to stop Jordan from defending its national and pan-Arab interests and protecting its dignity through direct political engagement with Israel that clearly shows which party is the aggressor in this conflict."

-- "Blame at the wrong door"

Centrist, elite English daily Jordan Times editorial opines (07/02): "According to John Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would not be in the situation it is if it was not for Damascus hosting Hamas leaders. How very convenient of the United States to blame the Syrian leadership. So the Israeli occupation does not have anything to do with it? Washington's steadfast refusal to support international law vis-`-vis the conflict ... is also thus excused from blame, isn't it? It is a ridiculous assertion. Everyone knows, even in Washington, that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would not be where it is if Washington had taken an appropriately stringent line, not on the Palestinians, but on the Israelis.... Vis-`-vis Israel, the United States is neutered. It acts cowardly and hence wrongly. If the United States truly cared about the Middle East, it would act forcefully with all parties, not just the impoverished party under military occupation. Instead, unable, unwilling and obviously scared to criticize Israel, the U.S. administration must say something and blame someone, somewhere. Blame the Syrians. Blame Iran. Blame Hamas. Blame Arafat ... wait a minute, he's dead. Oh well, blame him anyway. This is not policy. It is pathetic."

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